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ABSTRACT

Grounded in a communication theory that assumes that the form of communication affects the content of the knowledge that a teacher conveys to his or her students, a study attempted to determine how violence is treated in the classroom. The site for the study was Darbin Elementary School, in a suburb of San Francisco. The method was observation, though informal interviews were also conducted with the teacher and the students. During the course of the observation, the researcher witnessed the teacher deal once with physical violence by helping a particularly dangerous student to "take time out" instead of throwing a tantrum. Most violence, however, surfaced only in a symbolic form, specifically in three activities or occurrences. First, a small, mischievous student shaped a paper clip into a gun and then proceeded to shoot people using sound effects; the teacher did not seem to take the incident seriously. Second, students who were asked to design a banner to represent their "tribe" or small group, devised sometimes violent insignia; again the teacher did not pursue extended discussion about these violent symbols. Third, when students read compositions containing violent implications to the class, the student audience laughed and the teacher commended the authors' creativity. The teacher's only response to these compositions was to underscore the difference between fantasy and reality. The specific meanings of symbolic violence are unclear and warrant further discussion. (Contains 22 references; designs from the banner are appended.) (TB)

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"I'm Not Being Violent, I'm Just Having Fun!"
Violence As Enacted Curriculum In A Fifth-Grade Classroom

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"I'm Not Being Violent, I'm Just Having Fun!"
Violence As Enacted Curriculum In A Fifth-Grade Classroom

Abstract

As part of a larger ethnographic study of an elementary classroom, this paper focuses on the hidden curriculum of violence that is created and sustained through teacher-student interaction within a fifth-grade classroom. The paper describes and analyzes three classroom activities in terms of the assumptions about violence that are co-created by teacher and student. This study reveals violence to be a useful resource for creativity, laughter, empowerment, and for getting attention.

Introduction

In February 1993, in a busy shopping center near Liverpool, England, a two-year-old boy wandered from his mother's side at a check-out counter. Two days later, the boy's brutally beaten corpse was discovered near a set of railroad tracks. It was discovered through hidden security cameras that the toddler had been lured away from the shopping center, hand-in-hand, by two ten-year-old boys (Britons, 1993). According to police reports, the youths had dragged the toddler through the streets, murdered him, and left his body to be run over by a train (Britain, 1993). Britons were shocked at what the media labeled the Liverpool Child Murder. Angry mobs flooded the streets of Liverpool during the trial of the two young killers in protest of the rapidly increasing rate of juvenile crime.[1] Later that same year in San Jose, California, eight-year-old Melvin Ancheta was home from school alone sick when he was tricked into letting three of his brother's friends, ages fifteen, seventeen and nineteen, into his house. Melvin was stabbed with a butcher knife, gagged with a sock, tied with a cord, and then hacked to death with a meat cleaver (Gonzales, 1994a).[2] This tortured slaying was cited nationally as a symbol of the escalating problem of child violence in the United States.[3] The Liverpool Child Murder and the Melvin Ancheta slaying are two examples that illustrate the increasing brutality and violence occurring among children across the world. Although these cases may seem on the surface exceptional and rather bizarre, they draw attention to the increasingly young age of perpetrators of violence.

Violence in Schools

According to Marian Wright Edelman, president of the Children's Defense Fund, "the crisis of children having children has been eclipsed by the greater crisis of children killing children" (Grim report, 1994, p. 15). Currently, homicide is the nation's third-leading cause of death for elementary- and middle school-age children (p. 15). It is estimated that one out of twenty high school students in the United States carries a gun (Williams-Hayes, 1993). Drive-by shootings

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[1] The two boys are the youngest children to be charged with murder in Britain since 1861 (Crowd pelts, 1993).

[2] The nineteen-year-old is serving a life sentence in prison; and the seventeen-year-old assailant (now age eighteen) was sentenced to twenty-five years to life in prison instead of the California Youth Authority, where he would have remained until age twenty-five. The fifteen-year-old, who instigated the plot and admitted hacking Melvin to death, was sentenced to the California Youth Authority—he will be released at age twenty-five (Gonzales, 1994b).

[3] The Melvin Ancheta slaying helped pass legislation that lowers the age at which a juvenile charged with a violent crime can be tried as an adult from sixteen to fourteen (Gonzales, 1994b).

are currently considered an "urgent... public health problem" (Drive-by, 1994). Prior to the 1960s, schools in the United States were considered safe havens for children. However, since the mid-1970s, the mere act of attending class has become a life hazard for many students (Delaney, 1975). Currently in the mid-1990s, an epidemic of violence blankets the nation's school system. Children of all ages are threatened en route to campus by sexual assailants and a crossfire of bullets exchanged by rival teenage "gang bangers" (Mariani, 1994). In response, school officials install elaborate security systems and metal-detectors in inner-city schools. School police officers trade their service revolvers for more powerful semi-automatic weapons, and administrators enforce "zero tolerance" laws that require the immediate expulsion of students who bring guns to campus. Although these prison-like techniques promote the immediate physical safety of students, they do not provide schools with long-term solutions to this growing problem. Of particular concern to scholars is: How can we as teachers and teacher educators contribute to understanding the widespread problem of violence among school-age children? In response to the Liverpool Child Murder, Prime Minister John Major instigated a "crusade against crime" that included the enactment of stricter laws allowing courts to send children to prison at an earlier age. Major stated, "I feel strongly that society needs to condemn a little more and understand a little less" (British officials, 1993). Locally, Assemblyman Chuck Quackenbush used the Melvin Ancheta slaying to promote the "Three Strikes" bill: "I use Melvin to galvanize public support of the need to lock up these monsters" (Gonzales, 1994a, p. 1). The responses of these two leaders raise several questions: How well do we as a society understand the problem of child violence? Who is accountable for these child "monsters?" More importantly, who is responsible for finding as well as implementing a solution? As critical scholars in the field of communication studies, we have a responsibility to contribute to the current discussion on child violence. Our responsibilities include questioning the norms and roles connected with the educational process for the purpose of transforming, or creating, knowledge and acting upon that new knowledge (Simon & Dippo, 1986; Lather, 1986). Therefore, in contrast to the statements of political leaders such as Major and Quackenbush, the following piece of research is grounded in the assumption that more understanding, rather than more condemnation, is the key to preventing the deaths of hundreds of school age children each day.

Ironically, schools function as not only the setting for the victims and perpetrators of violence, but are also the very places where children learn about the concept of violence. As Willis (1990) states, "Violence can have a symbolic as well as a physical part to play in social interaction and in complex human meanings" (p. 100). Although acts involving guns and knives are the more obvious forms of violence, far less obvious (and potentially more powerful) are the symbolic acts of violence that emerge through lessons and activities occurring within the four walls of the classroom. Since critical communication scholars are committed to uncovering the ways in which communication influences the process of socialization, the purpose of this paper is to expose the hidden curriculum of violence in the classroom that influences the socialization of children into a world filled with violence and mayhem.

Communication In The Classroom

This study is grounded in the subfield of instructional communication, which supports the idea that "the form of communication used in the classroom affects the content of the knowledge that the teacher and students mutually construct" (White, 1989, p. 299). Because children learn at a relatively young age what is acceptable and unacceptable in the immediate world around them, the elementary school classroom provides a suitable context for studying the ways in which children learn how to behave:

> When children enter school, they are entering into a world of prescribed roles; in this world the rules, expectations, social behavior, even the proper time to get a drink of water are all monitored by adults in an attempt to introduce children to the normative roles of students and of citizens in a larger community. (Oseroff-Varnell & Staton-Spicer, 1987, p. 2)

In this sense, the teacher acts as an intermediary between the child and the world outside the classroom. It is through this interaction between teacher and student that social knowledge is constructed and transformed. Scholars call the curriculum that emerges from this face-to-face interaction, the "enacted curriculum" (Barnes, 1976; Eisner, 1985). White (1989) adds that "what is taught and what is learned depends on more than what the teacher has prepared. It depends largely on the patterns of communication that the teacher has set up in the classroom" (p. 301). Therefore, the teacher's influence in terms of student knowledge occurs through both direct and indirect means. Woven throughout the classroom discourse are "signals" from teachers regarding the forms of knowledge and ways of thinking that are valued (Ball & Friel, 1991, p. 44) in addition to what behavior is acceptable and unacceptable within society. Similarly, the

hidden curriculum teaches students indirectly (compared to curriculum in the form of a prepared lesson plan). In the course of collecting data for a larger ethnographic study, I began to take special notice of the hidden messages about violence that emerged from the dynamics of a fifth-grade classroom. Similar to White's ethnographic study of a kindergarten classroom, this study focuses on how teacher and students within a fifth-grade classroom use speech as they actively engage in the formation of knowledge, specifically as it pertains to the concept of violence. Data is generated from class assignments, group activities, classroom dialogue, and the unpredictable events that occur daily in an elementary classroom. The specific goals of this paper are: (1) to describe and analyze the teacher-student relationship and illustrate the enacted curriculum of violence according to several classroom activities, and (2) to explore the knowledge that is constructed about violence and its implications in terms of teaching and learning. In the next section, I describe the context of this study and the methods used to collect the data. Following this description, I present an analysis of three particular classroom activities. The paper concludes with a synthesis of these classroom observations and several implications for teaching and learning.

Conducting The Study

The site for this study is Darbin Elementary School in the Hillview School District, located in a California suburb within a thirty-five mile radius of San Francisco.[1] Although the residents within the school district are considered affluent, Darbin draws its students from an impoverished population that resides mainly in rental apartments and condominiums. The school was built in 1948 on nine acres of a park that draws members of the community on evenings and weekends. The school-park area is open to the public (there are no fences or gates) and very little graffiti or vandalism is apparent. The student population of Darbin is composed of families from various ethnic and national origins.[2] Many students belong to families with incomes on or below the poverty level. Although meeting the needs of this diverse student population is a challenge for Darbin educators, the Hillview School District received special designation from the State of California as "Distinguished Schools" in 1986, 1990, and 1991.

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[1] For the purpose of confidentiality, all names of people and places have been changed.

[2] According to a 1991-1992 school census, Darbin's student population consists of 63% Hispanic, 15% Caucasian, 11% Asian, 7% Black, 2% Filipino, 1% Pacific Islander, and 1% American Indian. More than twenty-one languages are spoken on the Darbin Campus alone.

From a surface glance, less violence occurs at Darbin Elementary compared to most inner-city schools. Physical violence among students on campus is low, as indicated by the low number of student suspensions and expulsions during the 1991-1992 school year.

Data for this study were collected through participant observation and face-to-face interviews. The primary source of data is twenty hours of classroom observation. Most observations occurred in the same classroom, with one visit to the campus library. I assumed as my primary role a non-participant observer. However, I sometimes walked around the classroom while the students engaged in group activities and asked them specific questions related to their individual projects. The students were unaware of my purpose for being in the classroom. Most appeared to believe that I was either a student teacher, a teaching assistant, or a personal friend of the teacher. In addition to classroom observation, I conducted a series of formal and informal interviews with the teacher and with several students. Two formal interviews were held with the teacher, one at the beginning of the study, and another after my final classroom visit.[1] Informal interviews with both teacher and students were held both in-class and outside of class. For example, I asked the teacher questions during recess in the teacher's lounge, and in the classroom while students worked autonomously on an assignment. Additional interviews were conducted off-campus, where I collected background information regarding the students and Darbin. Data were also collected in the form of brochures and handbooks given to me by school administrators.

Violence As Characterized Through Teacher-Student Interaction

Ms. Hunter has taught elementary education for five years. Three years ago she achieved mentor teacher status at Darbin. Her responsibilities include supervising student teachers and teaching aides. Ms. Hunter is considered by the faculty to be the "Disciplinarian of Darbin." Her strictness with students, her demanding teaching style, and her straightforward manner have earned respect among students, parents, colleagues, and administrators. She appears dedicated particularly to those students whom others have labeled as "problem" or "troubled." The following examples illustrate two definitions of violence that are created in the classroom through interaction between teacher and student.

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[1] Data were collected between September 1993 and December 1993.

Physical Violence Is Harmful

Micah is a rambunctious ten-year-old student who cannot control his anger. Bigger than most boys his age, Micah dumps over desks and throws chairs across the classroom when he gets angry or upset. He poses a physical threat to other students as well as the teacher. Ms. Hunter addresses this problem by signalling to Micah, what she calls a *time-out*: "Take a deep breath. I don't even want to see your anger, Young Man. It is completely unacceptable in this classroom. Go outside if you need to. Do whatever it takes." When Micah successfully avoids behaving in a violent manner, Ms. Hunter verbally praises him with congratulations on his "mature handling of the situation." Ms. Hunter reports that the *time-out* strategy has been a success—Micah has not thrown objects or hit another student in more than four months.

Discursive Violence Is Harmless

In contrast to Micah, Zachary is a "well-behaved and basically very pleasant" Guatemalan student who is much smaller than most children his age. Although Zachary projects an air of innocence, his Cheshire grin indicates a mischievious side to his personality. The problem with Zachary is a tendency to be "squirrelly." He cannot sit still or pay attention to what is going on in class.[1] Although Zachary is currently a participant in the GATE (Gifted And Talented Education) program, his grades are far below average. When I asked Ms. Hunter how this was possible, she replied that Zachary simply lacks the focus needed to function in a classroom environment. "You need to stay on his back all the time, and then he is fine." With this in mind, I began to watch more closely the interaction between Ms. Hunter and Zachary. During a period of quiet study time, Zachary was intently working on bending a paper clip into the shape of a gun. He then pretended to shoot his "gun" while making explosion noises with his voice. His first "victim" was the student-teacher who smiled, shook her head, and rolled her eyes before continuing with her paper work. Ms. Hunter approached Zachary's desk, grimaced, and sighed: "Oh Zachary, you are awfully violent today!" Zachary, grinning from ear to ear, innocently replied in defense, "I'm not violent, I'm just having fun!" He then playfully aimed his paper clip gun at Ms. Hunter, "Shoot the teacher! Boom!" Ms. Hunter responded with a shake of the head, and chuckled: "All that energy in such a tiny body." As she walked towards the opposite end of the classroom, Zachary continued to "gun down" nearby classmates.

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[1] A school site study team initially recommended Zachary for retention in second grade because of reasons including hyperactive behavior. Follow-up tests showed Zachary to be above average in intelligence.

These teacher-student interactions involving Micah and Zachary were handled in two distinctly different ways. Ms. Hunter felt Micah's behavior required immediate attention because there was a chance he could physically injure other students. Thus Ms. Hunter made it clear to Micah that such behavior was intolerable in the classroom: "Go outside if you have to." Furthermore, the situation was non-negotiable. Micah learned from the confrontation that, at least in Ms. Hunter's classroom, violent behavior is met with disciplinary action. The situation between Ms. Hunter and Zachary was thought of differently, however. The teacher did not see Zachary as a physical threat to other members of the class. After all, he is small in size, keeps his hands to himself, and overall is very affectionate towards other students, as compared to Micah. Pretending to shoot his classmates did not pose a physical threat, per se. Therefore, Zachary was not chastised for his behavior. By not disciplining Zachary, however, the message was created that such "playfulness" although laced with violence, is acceptable in the classroom as long as no one gets hurt. Since the incident was not considered a violent one (the "gun" was only a bent paper clip), Zachary was able to rationalize his way out of possible punishment: "I'm not violent, I'm just having fun!" Despite the fact that Zachary was not working on the assigned activity, and keeping nearby classmates from doing their work, his actions were regarded by Ms. Hunter as "harmless," and furthermore amusing—as indicated by her chuckle. Even Ms. Hunter's disdaining comment: "You're awfully violent today!" did not reflect serious concern.

These two examples reveal a mixed message created in the classroom about children and violence. It is acceptable to think violently and "pretend" to act, but actual violent behavior is unacceptable. Micah's expulsion from the classroom because of his violent behavior is one example of the techniques used by educators to teach students that physical forms of violence are unacceptable and intolerable both inside and outside the classroom. In Zachary's case, these same strategies are not applied to the less obvious symbolic forms of violence that indirectly teach students the acceptance of (unacted) violence. Zachary did not pose a substantial physical threat to other students with his paper clip gun, yet the message is that symbolic violence is not only a useful way to express creativity (after all, it took thought, creativity, and skill on Zachary's part to bend a paper clip into the shape of a gun) but also a way to receive attention and laughter from others. In this sense, violence is not intolerable as the Darbin classroom rules suggest.[1]

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[1] The "Darbin School Rules and Responsibilities" include no fighting, no foul language, keep hands and feet and objects to self, use common sense—If you think someone may get hurt, don't do it.

Violence As Defined Through Curricular Activity

Because of the subtle nature of the enacted curriculum as compared to other events that occur during the school day, it is more difficult to uncover and therefore more difficult to address. The remainder of this paper reveals some of the hidden meanings about violence that are created about violence through the enacted curriculum. For the purpose of this paper, I will discuss three specific curricular activities: Tribal flags, Writing Workshop, and The Perfect Day.

The Construction of Tribal Flags

At the beginning of the school year, Ms. Hunter's fifth grade class is organized into groups, or "tribes," consisting of four to six students. Each tribe is required to work collaboratively on creating a flag that represents their unique group. The tribal flag of *The Killer Stars* reflects the cultural diversity of these four male students (see Appendix 1, p. 1). The flag has been divided equally into four squares and each of the flags from their native countries (Vietnam, the United States, and Mexico) are drawn in the lower right corner. Whereas this represents the group co-existing in harmony, the opposing squares contain "self-portraits" of the tribe fighting each other with swords and shields. Similarly, the upper right corner of the flag contains the symbol of a star surrounded by crossed swords—illustrating their motto: "fighting and killing," hence the name of their tribe—*The Killer Stars*. As Ms. Hunter walked around the classroom, monitoring the groups' progress, she praised them for being "so creative" and for working together "nicely." Although *The Killer Stars* successfully completed the assignment according to Ms. Hunter's directions, their tribal flag directly contradicts the idea of collaboration. The symbolic messages revealed by their tribal name, illustrations, and motto are one of a culturally divided group at war with one another.

A similar message emerges from a second group's tribal flag (see Appendix 1, p. 2). This unnamed tribe consists of three boys and two girls. The planet earth is at the center of their flag. Circling the earth are the names of the tribal members. Although their names are linked around the globe (an allusion to world peace), this is contradicted by the visual dichotomy of a boys' territory and a girls' territory. Heart-shaped houses, a smiling sun, and "Hello-Kitty" characters smiling and holding hands comprise the girls' side of the flag. In dramatic contrast, the boy's side of the flag is illustrated with a human baseball head spit by a clown toward another clown waving a spiked bat. Clearly, the boy's territory is filled with more violent imagery as compared to the girls' peaceful, safe, and happy "home sweet home" illustrations. Ms. Hunter

commented on the girl's illustration as "pretty" and "very nice." In response to the boys' illustration, she requested information as to what exactly the characters were doing. As mentioned previously, the purpose of the assignment was to create group cohesion while at the same time allowing students to express their individuality. Although this unnamed tribe worked together on the same flag, they mapped out distinct territories—the girls' side and the boys' side. This tribe and *The Killer Stars* were praised for their "creativity," "excellent illustrations," and for working together cooperatively as a tribe. However, the visual content of the flags indicates a division in terms of gender—the boy's illustrations indicated war and violence and were in direct contrast with the girls' happy home drawings.

Daily Writing Workshop

In Ms. Hunter's class, the first curricular activity of the school day is a writing workshop. In addition to helping students develop their writing skills, the goal of the writing workshop is to ease students into the school day and give them an opportunity to express themselves through storytelling. The students are allowed to write about whatever they wish as long as their stories are at least five paragraphs long. Each student maintains a writing portfolio containing all the stories (s)he has written for that month. On several occasions, Ms. Hunter asked for volunteers to share with the class (in the "reader's chair") what they have written. On one particular day, Zachary begged Ms. Hunter to allow him to read his poem to the class. As his small body sat in the oversized "reader's chair" at the front of the class, Zachary read to the delight of his classmates his poem, entitled, *Be Naughty*:

This is the season to be naughty
Break a window, pop a tire.
Set your neighbor's cat on fire.
Punch your father
Spank your brother
Steal some underwear from your mother.
Act really brave
Make your father into a slave.
Crash a movie star
And steal his beautiful car.
Brake a house
Blow up a mouse.
Make a rat
Eat up a cat.
Make your sister run a mile
And then you smile.
Steal your best friend's ball,
Climb up to the porch and let him fall.

The class roared with laughter at Zachary's poem. Of particular interest was the majority of the student laughter occurring after the lines, "Make your father into a slave," and "Blow up a mouse." Following a customary round of applause from the audience, Ms. Hunter lead the class in what she described as a "praising" session. Students from the audience tell the class one thing that they really liked about the reader's story. Ms. Hunter views this as an essential part of students learning how to be good listeners as well as more confident writers. One student remarked, "I liked the part about making your father into a slave! That was funny!" After this brief praising session, Ms. Hunter smiled and commented, "What a nice poem, Zachary! It all rhymed. You did a nice job. Thank you." As Zachary jumped out of the "reader's chair," he smiled and responded, "I'm going to start right now on another poem."

Following Zachary's poem, Johnny read a story that also contained explicit descriptions of violence. As he read his story, laughter erupted from the audience. This, in turn, made Johnny also laugh as he read. Ms. Hunter, disturbed by the graphic violence, responded to the class, "That was a nice story, Johnny. Now can anyone tell me the difference between what would really happen, and what is considered fantasy? Could Johnny's story have really happened?" With some coaching, the students replied in unison, "No." Although Ms. Hunter called attention to the excessive violence in Johnny's story, there was no discussion concerning the quality, or type of violence. There was no distinction drawn between what was mentioned as "fantasy" violence and "real" violence. Furthermore, Ms. Hunter's interjection appeared to be more of a disclaimer rather than a discussion engaging students' thoughts or ideas. After her comments, the students continued to laugh at the stories presented by their classmates.

During my observation, students were also assigned to write a scary story to present to the class at the annual Halloween party. A prize would be offered to the student who wrote the scariest story. The titles of the stories included, *The missing brain, The cow without a head, The dog without a brain, The head without an owner, The missing head, The missing liver, The face without a nose, The missing finger.* All but a few of these stories were centered on missing body parts, or some part missing from a whole. One story, *Bloody Marcus,* tells of a boy who walks through a cemetery after his friends call him "Chicken." The character ends up drowning in blood from the severed body parts that emerge from a dead friend's grave. Similar to this story, more than half of the students' stories ended with the death of the protagonist. Ironically, the protagonists are named after students' classmates (usually a member of their own tribe). In this

case, the students themselves are victims of each other's symbolic acts of violence. The fictional world of storytelling and real-life existence appear to overlap.

Creating "The Perfect Day"

Each tribe was assigned to collectively decide on what they consider to be life in "The Perfect Day." A large piece of butcher paper divided into twenty-four squares (representing the hours in one day) was given to each tribe to illustrate. As I walked around to each tribe, I noticed one in particular that appeared extremely violent (see Appendix 2). In this "perfect" day, sleeping occurs between midnight and five a. m. Dream sequences indicated by bubbles drawn illustrate a boy dreaming of shootings and killings (using their eyes as weapons) and fighter planes dropping explosives. Similarly, at "nap time" during the perfect day, a plane bombs "Kid's Place" as it is consumed in flames. More violence occurs at two o'clock when the students "Kill parents for making you take a bath." I asked this tribe why they would think of or even want to kill their parents, and they responded, jokingly, "It's not real. It's just a joke." To make their point clear, they subsequently added a disclaimer to the illustration: the words "day dream" in parentheses. The word "fake" also appeared in parentheses in a separate box, referring to the boy pretending to go to sleep at eleven o'clock at night. Ms. Hunter appeared to be satisfied with the dream bubbles and disclaimer statements since the tribe showed an awareness of these violent acts as fantasy, and not "reality." Since discussion about the violent content of these images did not occur, I concluded that Ms. Hunter found the illustrations to be non-problematic and therefore acceptable.

The Functions Of Symbolic Violence In The Classroom

These three classroom activities illustrate the subtle ways in which students learn about violence. There are several ways in which violence emerges as acceptable. First, violence serves as a resource for creativity. In all three activities, the students were praised for their creative efforts. They exercised their creativity and willingness to work together for the tribal flags assignment, despite the divisions stemming from ethnic and gender differences. In the writing workshop, violence served as a resource for a plot line—the protagonist loses a body part and usually dies in the end. Zachary's poem, "Be Naughty," can be viewed as a resource guide for juvenile delinquency. In addition, "The Perfect Day" assignment provided the students with an opportunity to express their creativity through illustration, and also for the students to use their imagination: If they could do anything in one day, what would they do? Interesting and

somewhat disturbing is the desire of these children to commit numerous acts of violence (e. g., homocide, arson), while receiving no punishment for their actions.

Not only does symbolic violence serve as a resource for creativity, but it also functions as an instigator for laughter. As Johnny read his scary story to the class, students did not respond with fright, but instead with amusement. Although the criteria for the Halloween writing contest was the "scariest" story, the bloody descriptions of dismembered bodies and sudden deaths of their classmates appeared to be quite humorous to the class as a whole. In addition, the laughter functioned as positive reinforcement for the student authors. For example, Zachary seemed to enjoy so much his classmates' laughter and applause in response to his poem, that he expressed his intention to immediately begin work on a second poem. Furthermore, the "scariest" story was interpreted by the students as the most violent story. Therefore, the students logically concluded that the story containing the most violence would receive the most attention and recognition, and therefore would win the contest.

Symbolic violence also functions as a means of empowerment. The concept of the tribal flags symbolize group solidarity. However, *The Killer Stars* assert their strength and their unique ethnic identity through illustrations of inner-tribal combat with swords and shields. The flag of the unnamed tribe illustrates a sharp division between the sexes. The boys' illustration may seem violent compared to the girls' illustration, but it is acceptable in the classroom because it is considered self-expression—although gender-based. This is potentially dangerous in that it fosters an attitude of "boys will be boys," and thus establishes as the norm violent behavior among male students. The more violent the stories written by the students, the more attention (in the form of laughter) received from the audience. In this sense, symbolic violence empowers the student-author-artist, enabling him (or her) to elicit (and predict) an audience response. Regardless of whether the attention is positive or negative, the student learns that symbolic violence is a powerful and effective social technique.

Implications of This Research

The enacted curriculum, exemplified through student-teacher interactions in terms of discipline and curricular activities illustrates the ways in which violence is made meaningful to children. As reflected by the data, the specific meanings of symbolic violence is unclear and warrants further discussion. In this pilot study, the subtle messages about violence that emerge from classroom discourse are left unacknowledged by the teacher. Yet even if teachers recognize

the potential messages about violence that are constructed through the enacted curriculum, they may feel restricted in their power to address them. For example, although Ms. Hunter is the strict "Disciplinarian of Darbin," she is very conservative in her feedback on students' work. She expressed to me her feelings of being restricted in what she can say to students about their school work, because of the fear that parents could complain to the principal that their children (and the parents as well) are victims of unwarranted and potentially damaging criticism. Furthermore, even if teachers felt empowered to address the messages about violence that emerge through classroom interaction, there is not enough time in the school day to engage in extended dialogue—instructional time is already divided up and accounted for. Despite these constraints, however, scholars reinforce the urgency of addressing such social issues that play an integral role in shaping classroom discourse, and therefore shaping the students' views of the world. As Willis (1990) says, "We cannot avert our gaze selectively and conveniently when trouble looms and miss out whole tracts of social symbolic landscape which actually constitute the terrain underfoot as well as, often, the effective horizon for many young people" (p. 99). Therefore, in addition to ensuring the immediate physical safety of school children, educators are also responsible for addressing the potentially harmful assumptions about violence that are discursively created via the enacted curriculum.

Unfortunately, many teachers are not trained on how to cope with physical violence that may occur among students, much less on the subtle meanings of symbolic violence. The first step is to create an awareness among teachers and teacher educators of the powerful messages created through the enacted curriculum. Although affective learning has received much attention in terms of educating students, educators must also look at the cost of emphasizing one objective (e.g., working together collaboratively) over another (e. g., content of a student's illustration). Educators need a way to accomplish these objectives simultaneously. How can teachers talk to students about the amount of violence in their work? In addition to being aware of potential meanings created through student-teacher interaction, teachers can ask students questions and encourage them to think about the underlying assumptions of their stories and illustrations as well as the potential consequences of "real life" violence. Beyond the idea of disciplining students, is the framing of the classroom as a democratic community—not just as a place where students are encouraged to be unique individuals, but more importantly, realize their responsibility to the classroom community as a whole. The goal is neither to force students

to "behave," per se, nor stifle their creativity, but rather to encourage children to explore the implications—and more importantly, the consequences—of their actions in different forms within multiple contexts. This requires much classroom dialogue, in which the students' voices play a major contributing role. It is at this point that communication emerges as paramount—it is only through learning how to communicate appropriately that children are able to join other humans and become a society (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1992).

Addressing discursive violence in the classroom is a difficult task, especially when a large portion of the elementary school teacher's time and energy is directed towards maintaining control of the classroom, as Ms. Hunter has expressed. Furthermore, with the large amounts of violence that children are exposed to via television, the movies, and video games, it appears that there is no escaping it. However, as communication educators, we recognize the classroom environment as a place of reading, writing, and *talking* about what we read and write. Learning requires time for students to think and reflect upon events. As Ira Shor writes in his book, *Empowering Education* : "When an everyday habit becomes the subject of unusual scrutiny, it can raise awareness about the meaning of experience" (p. 45). Although it is unclear whether news stories such as the Liverpool Child Murder and the Melvin Ancheta are appropriate for classroom discussion involving young children, fictional stories (e. g., those written by students) can serve as powerful springboards for discussion about violence as it relates to the student's own experience. In this sense, learning is looked upon as a process of "making connections" and seeing the interconnectedness of different subjects and experiences (Phelan, 1992, p. 19). Teachers can generate meaningful dialogue with students about the issues of violence, using problem-posing techniques originating from the violent messages that emerge from student-teacher interaction (as illustrated in the activities discussed in this paper) and also those issues pertaining to the media violence that students are exposed to outside of the classroom. Ultimately, teachers need more flexibility in terms of the daily planned curriculum and more freedom to attend to the enacted curriculum. As a result of dialogue about symbolic violence, teachers will not only be able to better communicate with students about issues that are relevant to their own lives, but as a result generate some useful data that can contribute to solving the problem of enacted violence among the nation's youth.

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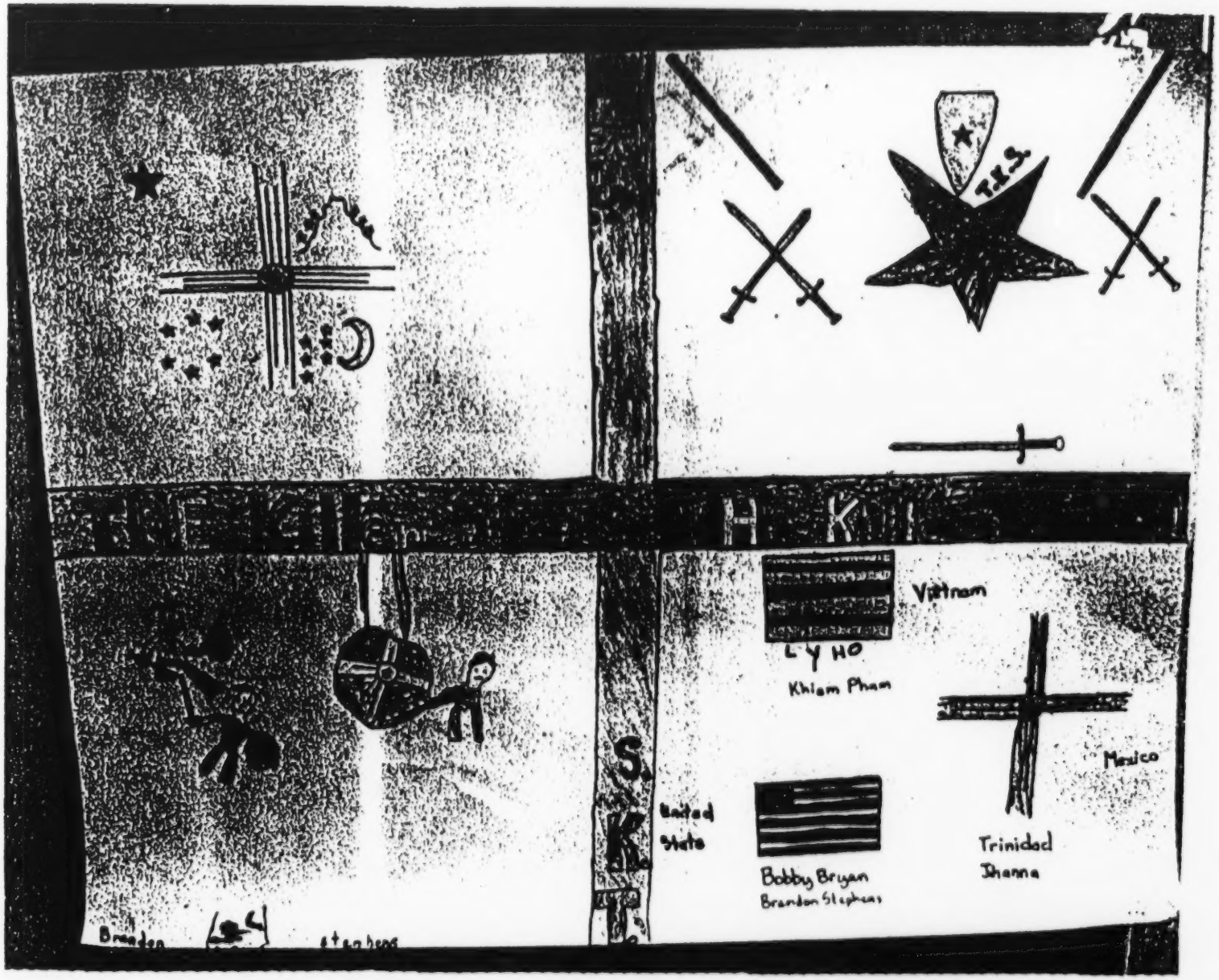
Appendix 1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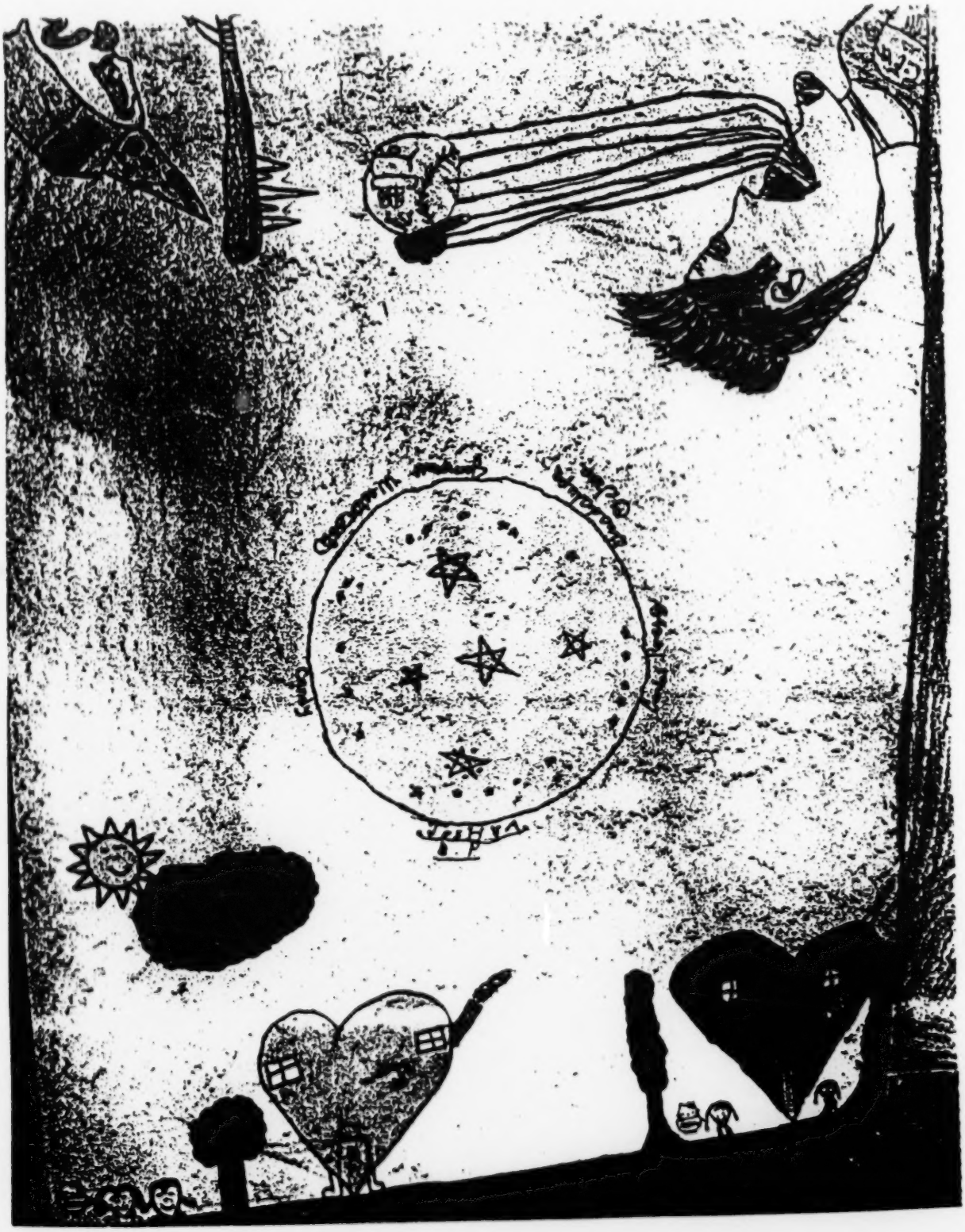
Appendix 1



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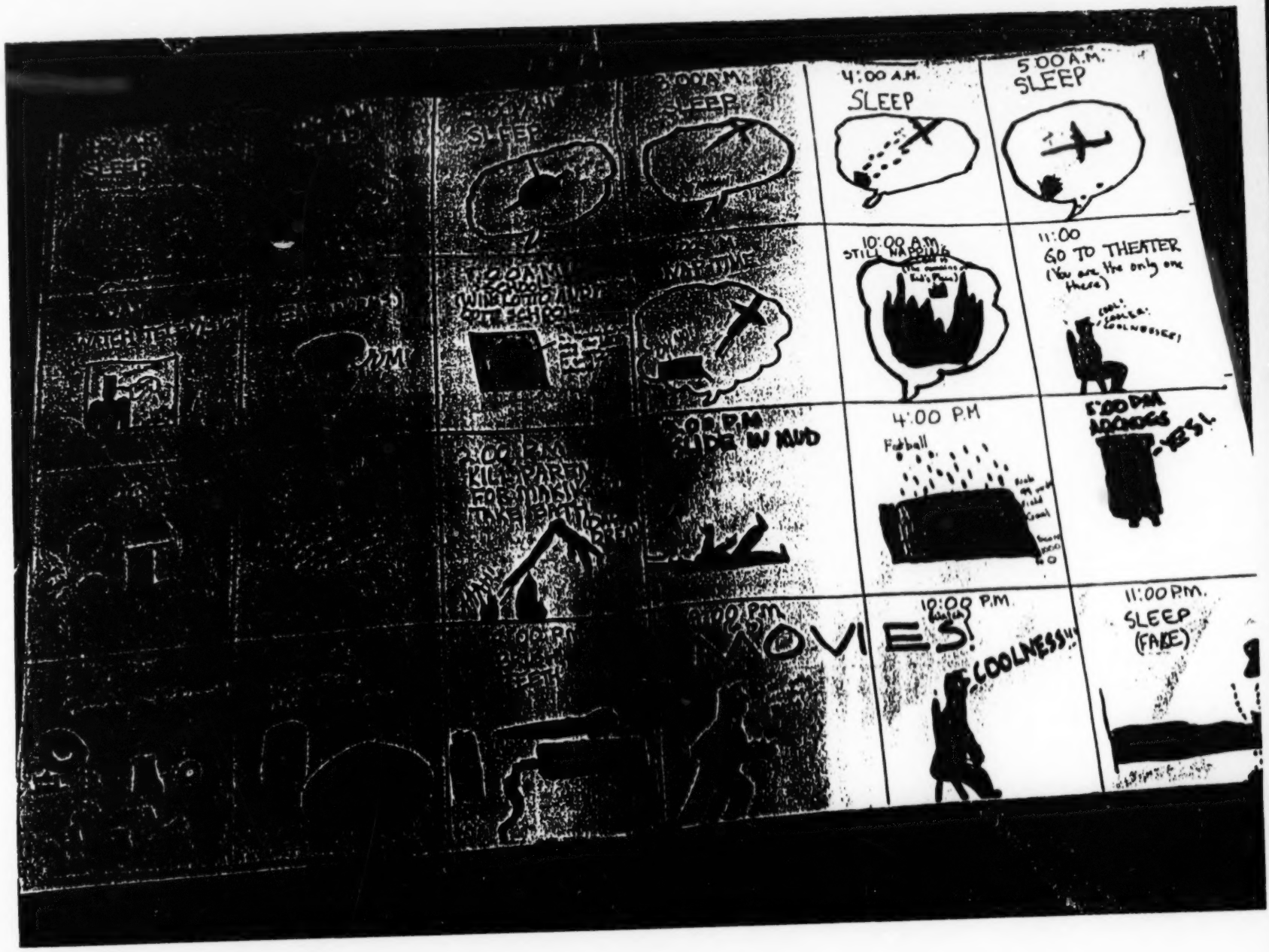
Appendix 2



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